

# Men of Devotion

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In the closing words to his son in the gospel, "The time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," the Apostle Paul portrays a devotion to his God and his calling such as can only be sustained by a life of prayer and devotion; and in his exhortation to Timothy he urges him to a similar life of completest consecration: "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." And to us his call comes ringing across the years, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable (some prefer 'spiritual') service."

The word devotion as used in the above caption has a much broader connotation than we ordinarily allow. It is a noun derived from the verb devote, from which also comes the adjective devoted. Its synonyms are: allegiance, fealty, fidelity, loyalty, piety. It may mean ardent affection, zealous attachment, religious fervor, an act evincing devotedness, and acts of worship, prayers and supplications. In the Old Testament the word devoted may mean either consecrated or doomed. A lamb might be consecrated to God, a city devoted to destruction. In either case the thing concerned was turned over for a purpose. The man of God, if a true man of God, is a devoted man, one who by act of his own will and by acceptance of God is completely "turned over," spirit and soul and body, to God for a divine purpose. He is devoted to God and therefore ought to be also devoted to the service of God. However we have a fear that one may be devoted to service for the sake of enjoying the activity and yet not be devoted heart and soul to the very God for and to whom the service is supposed to be rendered. A woman once confessed to me a heart-deep bitterness against her father for some injustice done her in childhood. In her middle years, her last sister married and left home which necessitated her giving up her profession as a trained nurse and going home to take care of her father. She told me that neither brother nor sister could find fault with her faithful performance of duty and her care of the old gentleman. "But," said she, "while I do that for him, down in my heart I hate him yet. How can I get rid of this terrible feeling?" The rest of

the family and the neighbors saw her as a woman who had made a great surrender and was devotedly taking care of her father; but she knew that while devoted to this service, down in her heart she was not devoted to the object of her care.

There is a devotion to God which, while on a much higher plane than that of sweetheart and lover, can be somewhat better understood when terms of the latter relationship are considered. There is a constant desire for nearness each to the other, a mutual self-surrender, a mutual trust and faith, and these projected over into the married relationship combine to become a continual life-long adjustment of mind and purpose and life. All of these characterize the minister as a man of devotion. The desire for nearness becomes a Christian's delight in fellowship and communion with El Shaddai, the All-sufficient One. Devotion so considered means loyalty and fidelity, even though the loved one may be miles away. Such a devotion will offer the beloved a service which, though it may involve self-denial, will be unbegrudged and unstinted--a love service. Such devotion is not content to express itself in cold mechanical acts, its heart is in everything that is offered or done. It amounts to love, admiration, adoration and worship, and declares, "I delight to do Thy will, O God!"

The minister to be what he ought to be must be God's own, peculiarly God's own, uniquely His very own. Satan has no chains, no straps, nor even strings upon him, and the world holds no mortgage against God's property. God has called him out of the world; he has responded with all his heart. He is by his own will, as well as by the act of God, set apart from the serfdom of sin and, of course, was long ago delivered from slavery to the devil; he is God's very own human property--utterly devoted to God.

When it comes to devotion as it relates to prayers, supplications, worship, both in general and in particular, there are other thoughts which must be brought in here.

Worship relates to wonder. When we cease to wonder we cease to worship. Wonder may be defined as: feeling of awe, something of curiosity, something of near-disbelief (but not necessarily doubt). Feeling of awe--Thomas cries out, "My Lord and my God!" Something of curiosity--"And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." Something of near-disbelief (but not necessarily doubt) -- "And Elisabeth spake out with a loud voice, and said, Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" And as the joy of salvation comes flooding into a spiritually new-born soul, he cries out, "Oh, what is this

which has happened to me?" Wonder--curiosity, plus research and you have science. Wonder--almost near-disbelief, plus natural philosophy and you have doubt, modernism, atheism. Wonder--awe, plus faith and you have worship. I may not understand a great many things, but I can believe; I can trust; I do have confidence; and I enjoy benefits divine.

"I know not how this saving faith  
To me He did impart,  
Nor how believing in His Word  
Wrought peace within my heart.

"But I know whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that He is able,  
To keep that which I've committed  
Unto Him against that day."

When a man thinks he has all the answers, he ceases to worship; he may go through stated forms to satisfy his own conscience or to meet the expectation of others, but he has ceased to worship in his heart. And when a man is satisfied with small answers to great problems volunteered by little men he also ceases to worship. But the man of God, the man of devotion, the man of wonder and awe and faith will be content, content to stand with Moses and say, "The secret things belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the works of the law."

THERE IS THE WONDER OF INSPIRATION. To think that God should speak unto man! I was a lost soul heading for a devil's hell, a soul unable to stop in its mad career, a soul which knew not its way out and up, and could not save itself. Then God spoke. He did not have to; but He did. He showed me the way out, told me what to do, pointed the way of salvation and made His divine help available to lift me, saved me, and set me going toward Heaven. And He promised to see me all the way through. "Wonder of wonders that He should love me!" I stand in awe, but I accept His word: the promise which holds; and His love saves me according to the promise. And lo, the Word which amazes me is still "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" all the way through. The wonder of inspiration!

THERE IS THE WONDER OF FELLOWSHIP. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" "Upon us?" "That we?" Who are we anyhow? What did we spring from? Where did we come

from? And Paul, like John, takes up the note of wonder and praise: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it in the ignorance of unbelief. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." And now, to think I am "a worker together with Him!" And "who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." The wonder of such fellowship!

"Under His wings, under His wings,  
Who from His love can sever?  
Under His wings my soul shall abide,  
Safely abide for ever!"

THEN THERE IS THE WONDER OF PRAYER AND ITS ANSWER. A mother in the east with a wayward son in the midwest experienced a terrific burden one night for his salvation. Making her way through the dark to the always-unlocked welcoming door of the little church, she entered and swiftly passed up the aisle to the familiar altar where her soul, hour after hour pressed its burden home to the sympathetic heart of her Lord Christ. Around eleven o'clock her faith touched through, the clouds cleared away and she knew that God had undertaken for the salvation of her son. In only a few days she received a letter from the lad in the midwest telling her that only a few nights before, under terrible conviction for sin, unable to find relief in either pool-hall or theater, he had gone to his room, fallen upon his knees, and around ten o'clock found peace with God. God's trains always come in on time. When her faith was touching through about eleven o'clock east of the time-line, her son was coming through to victory at ten o'clock west of the time-line. The wonder of prayer and its answer! An atheist sneeringly attacked Bishop Thoburn of India with the tirade: "Jesus alive! Jesus alive! How do you know Jesus is alive?" Very quietly and all unruffled, the Bishop answered: "Why, I was talking with Him this morning!"

Which leads us to THE WONDER OF INTERCESSION. Think

of the wonderful promise He has given: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, let him ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." Power with God; power with men! Think of the Angel-word spoken to Jacob that night at Jabbok: "As a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed." It is always in that order; power with God precedes power with men. The wonder of intercession!

"And what shall I more say?" Time fails me to do other than point out by name a few shining examples of wonder and worship, of faith and devotion: John Wesley, John Knox, John Bunyan, David Brainerd, George Muller, Praying Hyde, E. M. Bounds, Andrew Murray, Hudson Taylor and a host of others. And then I think of a long line of lesser lights--or are they lesser? One time I wrote from South Dakota to my wife saying, "What these five weeks have done for the people here I do not know; but I do know that once more your husband has met a band of men and women who live deeply enough with God to make him hungry." I was thinking of the Schmidts, the Schuetzers, the Matsons, and the Gisselbecks; "there were giants in the earth in those days!" Oh, for the Holy Spirit to raise up another generation worthy of the accusation, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also!"

Lest I be misunderstood in this, I am adding it in a very modulated tone. Accruing to the Man of God who gives himself wholeheartedly to service to God in the vineyard and in secret to fellowship, communion, prayer and intercession, there are personal, spiritual, mental and even physical compensations. "The Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth. . .giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:28-31). An involved wonder of the life of fellowship, of faith, prayer, and of Christlike intercession!

With apologies, let me put into the mouths of those yester-years giants of wonder, faith and prevailing prayer lines from "In Flanders Fields" by Major John McCrae, Canadian Scottish Regiment, altered for the present purpose:

"We are the Dead.  
Short days ago we lived,  
Felt dawn, saw sunset glow,

*The Asbury Seminarian*

Rode saddle, walked and worked with God;  
But now we lie,  
Waiting the trumpet.

"Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The Gospel torch;  
Be yours to hold it high. If ye break faith with us  
Who before you worked and walked with God,  
We shall not sleep so well  
Waiting the trumpet."